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Lucia A Keegan 07/18/2006 03:08:26 PM From DB/Inbox: Lucia A Keegan

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 004817

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STATE FOR NEA/I-MAGSAMEN, S/I-SANFORD, EUR/WE-LARREA, C

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/13/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [IZ](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: FRANCE: SCENESETTER FOR THE VISIT OF DEPUTY
SECRETARY KIMMITT AND COUNSELOR ZELIKOW

SIPDIS

Classified By: ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION JOSIAH ROSENBLATT FOR REA
SONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

SUMMARY AND COMMENT

11. (C) The visit of Deputy Secretary Kimmitt, Counselor Zelikow and the Iraq Compact delegation offers the best opportunity thus far to move the French toward significant involvement in Iraq's reconstruction. The GOF has been publicly supportive of the new Iraqi government. However, its response to past appeals for aid has been poor, citing corruption, the lack of security, and the presence of Coalition troops in Iraq. These concerns, coming on top of their objection to the Coalition's 2003 intervention in Iraq, continue to stand in the way of meaningful French engagement. Any change in the French stance would require a decision at the top -- by President Chirac.

FRANCE AND IRAQ

12. (C) The GOF has publicly supported the Iraqi Constitution, elections, and formation of a new government, all of which it has hailed as elements of progress toward the restoration of Iraqi sovereignty. FM Douste-Blazy met in June with new Iraqi Vice-President Abdel-Mehdi, and expressed support for the new Iraqi government. The GOF has consistently pushed for greater inclusion of Sunni representatives in the Iraqi political process. Though the French are not in favor of a precipitate withdrawal of foreign troops from Iraq, they have argued that a clear

perspective for their departure would facilitate Sunni inclusion, and weaken the political foundations of the insurgency. GOF interlocutors also express frequent concern about the security situation in Iraq, and have been reluctant to entertain proposals for additional assistance to Iraq without evident progress toward a secure and stable Iraq. The abduction of French journalists in 2004 and 2005 became a matter of national concern, and the GOF remains deeply reluctant to take any risks in Iraq.

ASSISTANCE TO IRAQ: A MIXED PICTURE

¶3. (U) France has provided its most meaningful assistance for Iraq reconstruction through multilateral initiatives. Its assistance to Iraq in 2005 totalled about 50 million Euros, of which 34 million euros was the French portion of EU assistance funds for Iraq. In addition, France is contributing 2.5 million euros or 13 percent of commonly-funded operating expenditures for the NATO training mission in Iraq (NTM-1), and contributed 500,000 euros to a NATO trust fund for training of Iraqis outside of Iraq. France has trained 40 Iraqi police in France via the EU JUSTLEX program; up to 200 are expected to participate in the program, though Iraq has had trouble identifying candidates and results of program are mixed.

¶4. (U) The GOF signed a bilateral debt reduction agreement with Iraq in December 2005, offering an 80 percent reduction of Iraq's debt between 2005 and 2008. The total debt canceled amounts to approximately 4 billion euros. It has sponsored cultural exchanges for Iraqi students to study in France, usually for periods of between two and six months; more than 500 students have participated. The GoF is also providing a 500,000 euro grant to a joint training project with the Japanese government for Iraqi engineers in Jordan in ¶2006.

¶5. (U) However, we have argued France could and should do more. It has not implemented a long-stalled offer to train 1,800 police outside Iraq; the Jordan International Police Training Center (JIPTC) could provide a viable alternative to training in France, but has made little headway since first proposed in 2003. France has not made a bilateral contribution to the UN/World Bank's International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq. It has not provided non-lethal material assistance to Iraq Security Forces, nor has it sent French trainers to NTM-1 or increased its contribution to the special NATO trust fund or general funds of NTM-1. It has not considered canceling the last 20 percent of Iraqi Paris Club debt to France.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

¶6. (C) Up to the present France has neither opposed nor greatly assisted Iraq reconstruction. In spite of the pragmatic line the GOF recently has taken with us in private on Iraq -- stressing the downside of a precipitous U.S. withdrawal and the shared international interest in ensuring a successful transition to a stable, democratic government-- new offers of assistance have so far not been forthcoming. The GOF routinely voices its willingness to consider an increase in assistance, but always qualifies this as pending an improvement in the security situation.

¶7. (C) Because of the Compact's focus on UN involvement, stress on Iraqi ownership and multilateral framework, it offers an excellent opportunity to engage the French about what they can do to increase and improve their assistance to Iraq. However, any significant increase in French aid and involvement would require a political decision at the top, by President Chirac. Please visit Paris' Classified Website at:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.cfm>

